

Science News a Century Ago

Entomological Society: Prizes for Essays

At a general meeting of the Entomological Society, held on June 2, 1834, the Rev. William Kirby, F.R.S., honorary president, in the chair, a scheme for the establishment of prize essays to be awarded by the Council, on the subject of noxious insects and remedies was adopted, one of the principal objects of the Society being to make its labours practically useful. Accordingly, an annual sum of five guineas, or a gold medal of the like value, would be made available for the writer of the best essay (drawn up from personal observation) upon the natural history, economy, and proceedings of such species of insects as are obnoxious to agricultural productions, to be illustrated by figures of the insects in their different states; together with the result of actual experiments made for the prevention of their attacks or the destruction of the insects themselves. It was decided that the subject of the essay for the year 1835 should be the turnip fly (*Entomol. Soc. Journal of Proceedings*, 1834).

Public Education in Great Britain

Early in 1834, Parliament had granted £40,000 for assisting the National Society for Educating the Poor and the British and Foreign School Society in erecting schools, this being the first grant of its kind. On June 3, 1834, Mr. J. A. Roebuck, M.P. for Bath, moved for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the means of establishing a system of education. Nobody, he said, would contest that the legislature considered the moral and intellectual improvement of the people so important as to justify an inquiry, in order to ascertain how far their moral and mental culture could be affected, influenced, or promoted by the Government. The motion was seconded by Sir W. Molesworth, who considered that the education of the lower classes was as deficient in quantity as it was in its quality, and it left the minds of the people in a state of indifference which could not but be condemned by every well-thinking individual. Lord Morpeth supported the motion, remarking that the grants already made could only be looked upon as experimental, as they were quite inadequate for the purpose of general education. After considerable discussion, on the suggestion of Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the motion was altered to read "that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the state of education of the people of England and Wales and into the application and effect of the grant made last session for the erection of school houses and to consider the expediency of further grants in aid of education".

The Royal Society

On June 5, 1834, ten additional candidates were elected into the fellowship, following nineteen elected previously in April. Their names were: John, Marquess of Breadalbane, Charles John, Lord Teignmouth, the Hon. George Elliot, the Rev. Frederick William Hope, Joseph Jekyll, the Rev. Robert Murphy, Sir George Rose, Richard Twining, William Robert Whatton, Dr. George Witt.

Among the newly elected in the above list, only a few can be said to have achieved distinction in science, social and family connexions in the main

seeming to serve as claims to recognition. The Rev. F. W. Hope, entomologist, is held in universal esteem for his contributions to entomology, and as founder of the chair of zoology in the University of Oxford. Hope took an active part in the formation of the Zoological Society in 1826, and of the Entomological Society in 1833. Robert Murphy, mathematician, was one of the seven children of a shoemaker. He early evinced mathematical qualities of mind, and ultimately graduated at Cambridge as third wrangler. William R. Whatton, surgeon and antiquary, was not long a fellow. He died on December 5, 1835, in his forty-sixth year.

Steam to India

In the *Mechanics Magazine* of June 7, 1834, it was stated that "The House of Commons, has on the motion of Mr. Chas. Grant, appointed a select committee to inquire into the best means of promoting steam communication with India. The Messrs. Seaward, of the Canal Works, Millwall, in a pamphlet which they have recently published on the subject, recommend that vessels of very large capacity should be employed—of 1,600 tons, for example, with engines of 246 horse power. Such a vessel, they say, would allow of 900 tons being appropriated to merchandise, 100 to provisions and water and 460 to coals—which last would suffice with occasional assistance from the wind to carry her to the Cape, where a further supply of coal could be obtained. The time occupied on the voyage is calculated not to exceed eleven weeks." In 1825, the steam vessel *Enterprise* had made the voyage from Falmouth to Calcutta via the Cape, but she had taken nearly four months for the passage. Five years later, the Admiralty started a steam packet service from Falmouth to various Mediterranean ports, and through this came the proposal to send mails by sea to Alexandria, whence they would be taken overland to Suez where a steam vessel would be waiting to convey them to Bombay. By an agreement between the British Government and the East India Co., this scheme came into force in 1837, thus reducing the time for letters to reach India by a half.

Wellington as Chancellor of the University of Oxford

On Monday, June 9, 1834, the Duke of Wellington arrived at Oxford for his installation as Chancellor of the University, alighting at the gate of University College, of which the vice-chancellor was the master. His election had been received with much enthusiasm, and the proceedings of June 10–13 were marked by many brilliant gatherings. On Tuesday forenoon, he proceeded to the Theatre accompanied by Lords Londonderry, Montague, Apsley and Hill, and on opening the Convocation declared that it had been convened for the purpose of conferring the degree of doctor of civil law on several distinguished individuals including the Dutch Minister, the late Russian Minister, the Dukes of Buccleugh and Newcastle, the Marquises of Salisbury and Bute, the Earls of Warwick and Winchelsea and others. Next morning, another gathering took place in the Theatre, of which the galleries, as before, were crowded with undergraduates who cheered the names of Wellington, Nelson, Canning and Pitt and the mention of the House of Lords and the University of Oxford, but showed their disapproval of references to the University of London, the "Gower Street Company" and the admission of Dissenters.